

"HELLO" MAN IN BRAILLE
by
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"Hello" Man in Braille

by CAROL BURKE



A FRANTIC HOUSEWIFE in Stamford, Connecticut, picked up the telephone. Unable to locate her husband anywhere, she called his answering service.

"My little girl has just fallen down the porch steps," she gasped. "Her head is badly cut!"

The operator acted quickly and calmly. As he spoke reassuringly to the distraught, almost hysterical mother, his swift fingers dialed the number of a local doctor. Within seconds, help was on the way to the injured child.

Though he saw neither the switchboard nor the dial with which he worked, the operator, C. Rodney Demarest, had not faltered in the emergency. Totally blind since his 18th year, Demarest today heads a thriving business which employs 20 persons and grosses more than \$100,000 a year!

When he first lost his sight 13 years ago, Demarest tried one routine job after another. Always he found the work unsatisfying, primarily because there seemed no way to get ahead. Finally he entered secretarial school, where he learned to type and to take Braille shorthand

at 120 words a minute. Now, he thought happily, he was ready for a better position.

But for four long months he looked in vain for a job. The answer was always the same: "Sorry, we have no place for you here."

Demarest gradually saw what he had to do—start his own business. In 1946, he borrowed \$400 and leased a room in Stamford. There he rented out desk space, acted as public stenographer, and with only six telephones began a telephone-answering service.

At the end of three months the business was still in the red. Here was the moment when many small businesses give up. But Demarest managed to borrow additional funds and stuck to it.

"It didn't occur to me to quit," he remembers now. "I believed I could make a success of it if I kept going, and I did."

By the end of the first year, his optimism and hard work had paid off. Demarest was taking home \$60 a week, and his list of clients was increasing rapidly.

Three years ago the answering service had grown to the point

where Demarest was working with 60 telephones. Although his well-trained sense of hearing unerringly guided his hand to the correct instrument, he had reached his limit of expansion. It was physically impossible for him to reach any more phones from his desk position.

AT THIS POINT, he changed over to switchboard operation. His specially constructed board is arranged in nine banks of ten lines each. When a call comes in, a small metal plate automatically drops to mark its position.

Because each bank has a distinctive ring, Demarest has only to run a finger along one bank until he reaches the plate which has dropped. Braille numbers below each plate identify the line so that he can give the proper greeting.

As he takes each call, Demarest types the message on tape with a Braille shorthand machine, then files it in a special folder for each client. When a client calls in, Demarest empties his folder and reads back the messages as swiftly as a sighted person.

Currently he takes more than 500 calls a day. Among his subscribers are an eye specialist, a deputy sheriff, real estate and insurance agents, exterminators and a diaper service.

One day a manufacturer called frantically. He was trying to reach his consulting engineer. "I have to find him right away," he said. "We're ready to start production on a new line he developed for us, but we've found a last-minute kink that will ruin the job."

Swiftly Demarest called the Stamford railroad station. Within min-

utes, he knew, the engineer would be vacation-bound and inaccessible for some days. Just as the train was pulling in, the engineer was paged. He postponed his vacation to iron out the wrinkles in the manufacturer's production plan. Thanks to Demarest's quick thinking, the company saved thousands of dollars.

In the near future, Demarest intends to train other blind persons to use his switchboard. With this accomplished, his service will go on a 24-hour basis. Then he will devote his time to working out new ways to expand business.

Already he has bought out a letter-shop company in Stamford, merged it with his own enterprise, and moved to larger quarters. Now he fills large orders for promotional and advertising letters. Some day he hopes to write the copy for the letters as well as print them.

But Demarest does not occupy himself solely with business. When he first became blind, his inclination was to avoid all social contacts. But he fought against this and forced himself to attend parties and concerts and follow his previous pattern of life. In time he learned to be at ease with friends, new and old.

In 1947, he was introduced to Antoinette Bauer, a nurse training at Norwalk Hospital, near Stamford. It wasn't long before they discovered they had many interests in common: music, swimming, and books.

They were married in 1948. Now they live in their own home in Darien with their two sons, C. Rodney, Jr., a blond boy of four, and Creighton Robert, one year old.

Reading is still one of Demarest's favorite hobbies. He reads both in

Braille and by listening to phonograph records supplied by the Library of Congress.

Last year Demarest ran for election to his community's Town Meeting form of government. At the time he declared: "I feel well qualified to perform the duties of such an office." His townsmen obviously felt the same way, for today Demarest serves them in the capacity of Town Meeting Representative.

From all over the country, appeals have come to him from blind persons interested in starting enterprises like his own. The demand has been such that Demarest is now

devoting his spare time to preparing a Braille manual on his methods of operation. When the pamphlet is published, his hard-won knowledge will be readily available to all sightless individuals.

"There," says Demarest emphatically, "lies the true value of my work. My personal experience has proven beyond doubt that blindness is no handicap in this business. Here is the opportunity for a man not only to support himself and his family by his own efforts, but to engage in a challenging field where expansion and increased profits are the reward of ambition."



Subtle Psychology



A HIGH-SCHOOL girl came into the kitchen one morning wearing a gray stocking on one foot and a brilliant red stocking on the other foot. Her father, rather surprised, asked if that was the way the girls at school were dressing. "Well," the daughter said, "they weren't yesterday, but they will tomorrow."

—CHARLES L. WALLIS
Treasury of Sermon Illustrations
(Abingdon Cokesbury Press)

THE PRINCIPAL of an Ohio high school thinks he has the TV *vs.* homework problem solved. "Next term," he says, "students will be kept in school 30 minutes longer—studying."

—PAUL DENIS

THE WIFE OF A forgetful friend of mine always addresses a postal card to herself and includes it in the pack of letters she gives her husband to mail. If she doesn't receive a card from herself in due

time, she knows the letters, forgotten, are still lying in her husband's coat pocket. —JOE SMITH, JR.

RECENTLY a woman in Seattle was brought into court with a black eye. Asked how she got it, she snapped: "I was struck by a gentleman." —EDWARD R. MURROW

"YOUR VOCATIONAL aptitude test indicates," remarked the youth's faculty advisor, "that your best opportunities lie in a field where your father holds an influential position."

—Nuggets

AN ADVERTISEMENT in a Canadian paper worked wonders recently. It ran: "Millionaire, young, wishes to meet, with a view to marriage, a girl like the heroine in X's novel." In less than 24 hours every copy of the novel in the city bookshops was sold.

—Tales of Hoffman

NOAH'S ARK

with Wings



All sorts of strange but lively cargoes are flown across the Atlantic

by CAPT. RUSSEL J. DICK, *Trans World Airlines*,
and DOUGLAS J. INGELLS

"BROTHER, you can have it!" said the mechanic at Orly Field near Paris. "I wouldn't fly the Atlantic with a live gorilla for a million bucks!" He walked away from my plane, shaking his head.

There was no mistake. One of my "passengers" on this trip was a real live gorilla, bound for a New York zoo. The rest, too, were hardly the kind of travelers you would expect to find on a modern airliner.

Some 200 chattering monkeys frisked about in a wire cage. A full-grown cheetah padded back and forth in her metal crate. Next door a Bengal tiger pawed at a piece of food. The manifest also

included ten Asiatic myna birds, a French poodle and a GI's pet cat bound for his farm in Indiana.

The menagerie was typical of what a TWA captain can expect when he pilots Noah's Ark on the all-cargo run. He can expect anything to happen, too; and it usually does, all as part of the Ark's unusual service.

Officially, the Ark is Trans World Airline's skyfreighter now serving America, Europe and the Middle East. Virtually it is an airlift that hauls anything and everything across the Atlantic.

Once a week a big craft, loaded with a variety of cargo, roars out

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